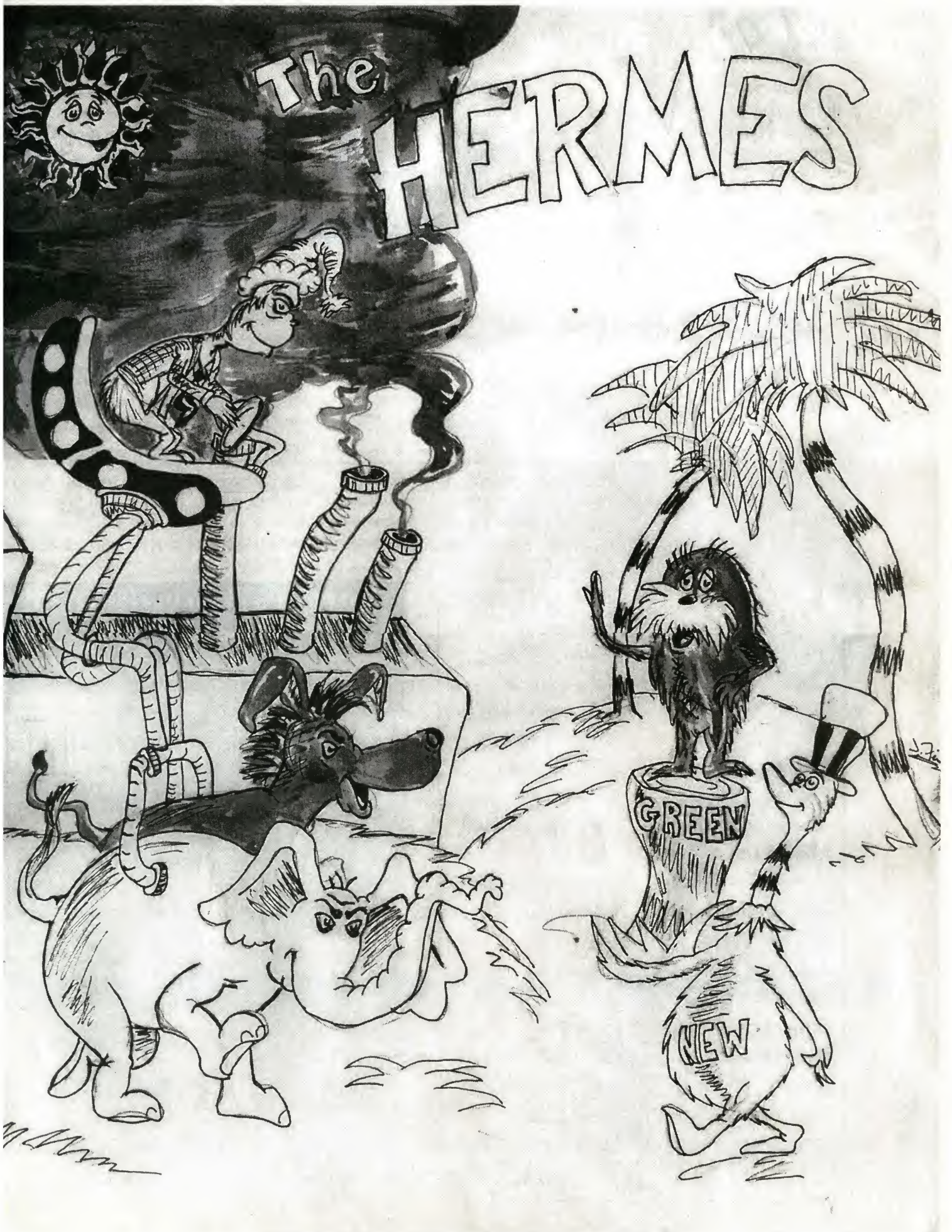


# The HERMES






## CAMPUS DIARY

I called ACUS about a month ago and told them I didn't want long distance service, but just wanted a campus phone, and they told me that I could get "intercom service" and do just that while avoiding the fourteen dollar a month charge on my phone. Two weeks later, I got an urgent message in my voice mail from Adrian Donahue, the guy at Westel who gives bulletin broadcast review abstracts before each message, telling me that he was going to close my voice mail box and end my phone service. After playing phone tag, this is what Adrian Donahue had to say.

*Hi Trevor, this is Adrian Donahue at Westel x4444. Yes, there have been some misconceptions about what the charges have been for over the past couple years. What you were referring to with the free service, you would have seen that on an older brochure. That was not this year. That's been discontinued. We used to call it intercom service. Its basic intention was just to have a basic phone, it really did not have incoming or outgoing service, on campus only with a very rudimentary voice mail box. It was specifically set up just to make sure that if a student couldn't afford a telephone,*

*that they basically had the ability to get security and they could hear security alerts on a voice mail box.*

*There's been a general misconception that the fourteen dollars has something to do with long distance and that's not the case and never really has been the case. There's no charge for long distance other than for the calls themselves. AT&T ACUS is our billing company and they bill the basic fourteen dollar rate and that is for the line with incoming and outgoing service and for the voice mail box and that's all tied together. We also no longer offer the advanced service. What we did is we brought up the mail boxes to the advanced level, and we allow people to have call waiting or any of the other features that were offered as enhanced. So we just have one basic charge and it's real simple: Dial tone is fourteen dollars. If you don't want it, you don't get it.*

I guess previous concern over students being able to afford the service was bogus. It's real simple: Dial tone is fourteen dollars. That's \$126 a year for something that used to be free with a few unneeded features. If you can't afford it, you don't get it. 

-- Trevor Griffey

### HERMES

#### *Third Party Alternatives*

<b>Toga Party</b>	Megan J. Wolff
<b>Cross Dressing Party</b>	Aongus Burke
<b>70's Party</b>	Catherine Herdlick
<b>TV Party</b>	Trevor Griffey
<b>Free Pizza Party</b>	Sarah Wilkes
<b>Free Spam Party</b>	Livia Gershon
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<b>Mocon Dance Party</b>	Janet Han
<b>Natural Law Party</b>	Sivan Kroll-Zeldin
<b>Naked Party</b>	Nellie Zupancic
<b>Eclectic Party</b>	Josh Hecht
<b>Acid Test Party</b>	Aaron Fox
<b>Beach Party</b>	Laura Clawson
<b>Super Bowl Party</b>	David Vine
<b>Pabst Party</b>	B. Edwards-Tiekert
<b>Galaxy 500 Party</b>	Monique Daviau
<b>Last Minute Party</b>	Daniel Young

*All opinions expressed are those of the authors, and do not necessarily represent the views of the Hermes staff.*

### Letters from Planet Isaac

Dear Hermes,

During part of the 1992 Tuesday night Republican Convention, my brother, at his home in Des Arc, Arkansas, said, "That Clinton never had told the truth before, why should they believe him now?"

You're right, Bob Dole is no Slick Willy, he keeps his word. Bob Dole has spent his whole life being truthful. Be sure "That the hypocrite reign not, lest the people be ensnared" (Job 34:30).

Sincerely,

Isaac Colvin  
Harrodsburg, KY





## ARTICLES

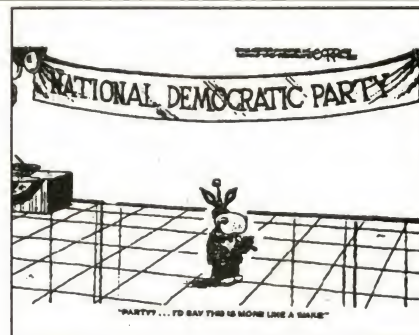
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<http://www.con.wesleyan.edu/groups/hermes/index.html>



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Sources: 1-8: Challenge the lies Campaign Organization Guide from Center for Campus Organizing; 10-14: US News and World Report, July 10th; 15-22: US News and World Report, October 14



# SORRY, BILL, YOU LOSE

## Why I'm *not* voting Clinton in '96

BY LAURA CLAWSON



POLITICS

In a few days, when I cast my absentee ballot, I will not be voting for Bill Clinton. In 1992, in the same fit of optimism that seized almost everyone I knew, I would probably have voted for him. I wish I had someone to feel optimistic about this year, but I simply can't vote for Clinton. And as I tell people this, horror is a common reaction. "What?!" they cry, "do you want Bob Dole to win?" Well, no...but I don't want Clinton to win, either. I do not want a man who doesn't support gay marriage, did support NAFTA, and, most heinously, signed the welfare and crime bills, to be president.

I should admit that my decision not to vote for Clinton is, in part, a luxury available to me as a resident of Massachusetts—I'm pretty damned sure that Dole won't win my state. If I lived in a state where the outcome was uncertain, it would be a harder decision to justify, though I would still be reluctant to vote for Clinton. Luxury or not, it is a sincere decision. I don't think Whitewater is a major problem, I don't care who he's fucked (though, if Gennifer Flowers and Paula Jones are any indication, he is attracted to women whose tackiness may well be a public health hazard), I hope he did actively evade service in the Vietnam War, and I think he's done a few things better than Bush would have. So what? He still doesn't have my vote.

And what if Dole does become president? That would be really fucking depressing, but I wouldn't tear my hair or slit my wrists. Because maybe, just maybe, if Dole was president all the people who have been supporting Clinton no matter what he did would start basing their reactions to legislation on the merit of the legislation



rather than the party affiliation of the president signing it into law. Maybe the people in Congress who absolutely know better than to believe that more prisons and harsher sentences would reduce crime, who absolutely know better than to believe that women can support their families on the money you can make from the kind of jobs being created in this country would stop voting like they do believe those things. And really, what's Dole going to do as president? Dismantle social services?

Despite my decided lack of enthusiasm for the major candidates I do believe that it's important to vote. The 1994 elections clearly proved that abstinence is not the answer to our problems. Even though I think that marching and picketing and sitting-in and striking and demonstrating and committing acts of civil disobedience are more important than voting, those things mean a lot more when they're backed up by your vote. Even though I know that my vote will have absolutely no effect on who becomes president, people on the left have to make it clear that we're here and we won't compromise on the lesser of two evils. Voting for Clinton will do nothing to improve future candidates for

president, for Congress, for governor—it will do nothing but keep Dole out of the White House. Not voting at all will do actual harm, because it will leave the people who are best served by the current state of things, the people who still have at least the opportunity to believe in electoral politics, as the only people who do vote.

So, given that I will not vote for Clinton, but believe that I must vote, what will I do when I cast that absentee ballot? I've been searching for a meaningful protest vote for a while now, with little success. I want my vote to make absolutely clear why I am not voting for Clinton or Dole and I don't want to be dismissed as a lone crazy person. So it has to be a person around whom there is some kind of political movement. Karl Marx was an early contender, but I suspect his gender politics were not mine. Then I decided it would be awfully ironic to vote for an anarchist, but the most famous one I could think of was Emma Goldman, and, like Marx, she's dead and wasn't born in the U.S. anyway. Mumia Abu-Jamal I quickly dismissed, because to me he's only significant as a chance to oppose the death penalty. And sadly enough, the revolution has not yet coalesced around any of my favorite authors.

I think that, in the end, I'm going to settle for voting for Ralph Nader. His platform is, to my limited knowledge, reasonable, and since it's an actual platform, the meaning of a vote for Nader is pretty clear. But I'm not enthusiastic about it, and I've been thinking—wouldn't it be great if we all got off our asses and organized and demonstrated and four years from now had someone to get excited about?



# THE NEW PARTY

BY NELLIE ZUPANCIC & SIVAN KROLL-ZELDIN

As progressives firmly committed to the principle that all individuals are responsible for one another, we believe that democratic government has the potential to ensure that all members of society are provided for. For us, that is what progressive politics are about: using government as a tool to assure that all people have equal opportunity and are guaranteed a decent standard of living. And yet, for some years now, the progressive movement in the United States has been spending most of its time playing defense: trying to soften the blows that the Right deals to the poor, the environment, education, and minorities. The Defense of Marriage Act (DOMA), the 1996 welfare bill, and the increase in the defense budget are all part of the national trend away from the Left. We are angry at the conservative legislation that Congress is passing, and frustrated with the absence of a proactive political movement that would affect positive change. However, while progressive politics on the national level are lagging, the New Party, which is concerned primarily with city and statewide politics, is fast a growing advocate of liberal ideas.

The New Party works on the local level in nine states and the District of Columbia to elect officials and pass ballot measures that support ethical progressive action. In recent years, many people have come to equate the connection between morality and government policy with the Christian Coalition's narrow definition of family values. As a result, politicians opposed to ideas espoused by the Religious Right have often been wary of giving moral reasons to support their public policy. However, conservatives should not have a monopoly on the idea that morality has an important place in politics. For us, morality includes a commitment to equality, concern for the environment, support of high quality education, and responsibility for the well being of others, all ideas supported by the New Party.

The New Party, although only founded a few years ago, has already made significant progress towards implementing a moral progressive agenda. Elected officials from the New Party have successfully raised minimum wages while taking measures to ensure that businesses remain competitive. They have enacted environmental legislation, promoted successful community policing programs, and have worked to reform school systems. Other New Party goals include universal health care, full employment and benefits, a system of progressive taxes based on the ability to pay, and an end to all forms of discrimination. It is also very concerned with reducing the defense budget, forming a trade policy beneficial to all nations, guaranteeing reproductive rights, and campaign reform issues.

The New Party is a particularly exciting movement because it is not only committed to vital progressive ideals, but also has an approach that garners real results. The New Party has won 94 of its first 140 races,

a direct result of the party's pragmatic strategy.

One New Party tactic for campaign reform is fusion, which allows parties to cross endorse political candidates. For instance, the same person can run as the candidate for both the New Party and the Democrats; this is currently not legal in many states. Where possible, it both facilitates coalition building between political parties and assures voters that they are not "wasting a vote" by supporting candidates who run on progressive third party platforms. In practical terms this means that the New Party could still support those Democrats who are dedicated to liberal ideas, but maintain their distance from a Democratic party which increasingly courts the center. The New Party is currently involved in a battle to make fusion legal in all states, and is bringing its case before the Supreme Court this December.

While fusion is an important issue to many small parties, the New Party is distinct from other progressive third parties because it is not concerned merely with publicizing progressive thought. In the upcoming presidential election, we are forced to choose between Bill Clinton, a candidate who in many ways has betrayed his party's liberal roots, and Ralph Nader, who is running on a solid progressive platform but who has no chance of winning. Running candidates for high-profile positions is a common tactic of third parties: the Green party is rallying behind Nader simply in order to give liberals the opportunity to express their dissatisfaction with major party candidates. Nader's campaign, and others like it, are valuable because they bring focus to progressive thought and lay the foundation for a president truly committed to liberal ideas. However, this approach cannot answer the problems presented an increasing nation-wide shift towards the Right. The New Party's approach, on the other hand, is designed to deal with this more immediate challenge. The New Party only runs candidates in races that it views as winnable. It tries to elect officials who will be able to affect positive change, not merely make a statement by running. In addition, the New Party realizes that while many Democratic candidates are far from ideal, they are clearly a better option than their Republican opponents. Therefore, if running a New Party candidate would split the liberal vote and allow a conservative to win, the New Party does not run a candidate of its own.

The United States is in desperate need of a political movement that addresses the dichotomy between rich and poor, the legislature's unwillingness to protect the environment, the dismal quality of public education, and the level of bigotry in this country. These problems will not disappear without strong liberal voices implementing meaningful change. The New Party is bringing to the political arena the kind of ethical, effective activism necessary in this country.





# HOPES FOR A GREEN TOMORROW

An interview with Linda Martin

BY LIVIA GERSHON



Linda Martin is the national coordinator of the Draft Nader for President Clearinghouse. The Clearinghouse is the main national organization that supports the Ralph Nader/Winona LaDuke campaign for President and Vice President on the Green Party ticket. Martin has been involved in political activism for over twenty years and has worked in pro-choice, public health, environmental protection, prison reform, and affordable housing movements. She has also worked extensively with the Hawaii Green Party. In 1992, the HGP drafted her to run for U.S. Senate, heading up a ticket of seventeen candidates for state and local office. She received thirteen percent of the vote, and one member of the ticket was elected to the Big Island County Council.

On October 3rd, Martin came to Wesleyan to take part in a panel discussion on third party politics organized by the Connecticut Green Party. A few weeks later I spoke with her about the Nader campaign and the Greens in general.

*How did you get involved in political organizing?*

I guess I've been involved in movement organizing since way back in the early '70s when I started working on the pro-choice issue. And one day, after twenty years, I woke up and just looked at what I was doing and said, "you know this is really frustrating." We put all this energy into documentary films, ballot initiatives—at one point while living in San Diego I had helped gather almost two hundred thousand signatures for ballot initiatives to stop the kind of sprawl growth that was taking over the city and county of San Diego—and I realized that all my advances could just be wiped out by the stroke of a pen, a pen that was held by an official. It was sort of an epiphany for me, that we had to do more than just hang out in the movement trenches and we had to really get involved with electoral politics and make sure that the people holding the pens were different people. The people wielding power in public policy issues were not our friends and we had to change this.

*Why did you choose the Green Party rather than one of the other alternative parties like the New Party or the Socialists or the Labor Party or whatever? What do you think the differences are?*

Well, there was really never any question about it for me. I knew first of all that the Greens represented my values, that my concern for the future and the resources of this planet are really paramount, and I felt that the Greens had a better grasp of what's necessary in order to create a sustainable economy and sustainable environmental practices that we need to save this planet.

I woke up and just looked at what I was doing and said, "Y'know, this is really frustrating."

But even so I would have been very disappointed and I would not have stayed with the Greens had they decided not to challenge the Democrats and the Republicans directly. And I

think that's the major difference right now between the New Party and the Socialists and DSA [Democratic Socialists of America] and the Greens is we're out there running third-party candidates and really challenging and creating an oppositional voice. It's an option for people who are disgusted by the two party system and find it's not really serving them, it's serving its corporate masters. I think the Socialists' economic policies are wonderful, and a lot of those policies are evidenced in Green platforms around the country, and I think the Labor folks have really good positions on workers' rights and worker safety, and we really support all of those. But I think until these other parties learn—and I think the New Party particularly—that they have to break away from the Democratic Party, they're not going to gain any ground and they're not going to make any difference.

*Do you think there are opportunities for networking between the Greens and some of the groups that are perceived as more constituents of other third parties—like unions or like people of color? I know that's sometimes a concern to people who talk about the Greens. They see them as purely a white environmental move-*



ment.

We certainly reach out, and we have for a long time. In Hawaii, we have a lot of native Hawaiians who work with us. But there's something called identity politics that intervenes many times when you try to do coalition-building. And I'm afraid that a lot of folks feel that they have to advocate for their own sort of narrow interest in order to be heard. And I think they're afraid that if they come in and do coalition building with people who seem to have a broader agenda that their voice will be lost. And I appreciate that, but I think they're wrong. I think that we've made some headway in reaching out to gay and lesbian rights folks here in Washington, D.C. In fact we have someone who's very active in ACT-UP and some other groups on our advisory committee with the Nader campaign. We have gained some ground in working with some labor folks—particular councils, certainly not the leadership, though, because the leadership is still very much married to the Democrats. But it seems to me that we're all just little teeny tiny voices crying in the wilderness, and until we learn to work together and build a broad-based coalition, we're going to remain on the fringes.

*You mentioned that you work with gay and lesbian rights groups,*

*and I know that's been a concern of some people, that people perceived Nader as almost blowing off the issue of gay and lesbian rights and also abortion. Some people seem to think that he sees them as side issues to*

*the economic and consumer rights issues that he focuses on.*

Well, I can't speak for Mr. Nader, as you know. He speaks for himself. But he has said that in this campaign he feels it's a diversion to get hung up on singles issues, and he feels that what really is necessary here is more democracy for everybody and more privacy for everybody. I think he sees the abortion issue as a pri-

vacuity issue, that the government has no business being involved in it. And I think that's an honorable position. As someone who's been working on pro-choice issues for twenty-five years it was very important for me to clarify that as far as where he stands on the issue. But in the same way I think that he sees the gay and lesbian issues as a fairness issue.

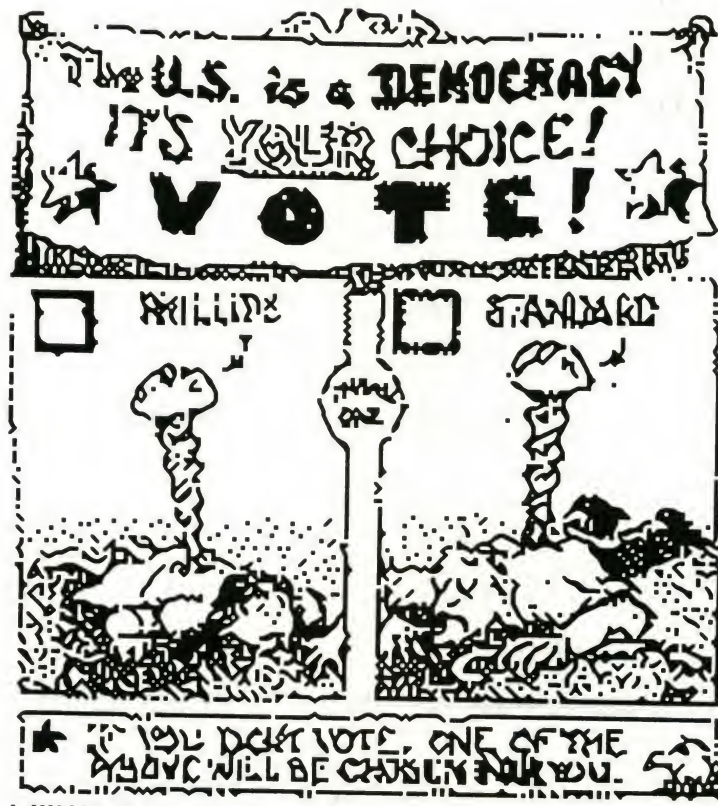
I know that he was criticized for using a term that as far as I know he invented, "gonadal politics." When he was questioned about that by our advisory board

member he said that he thought he was being respectful by using that term, that he thought it sounded better than sexual politics. But I think it's clear that he's not terribly worldly in some respects, that he was trying to use a word that was respectful and was really shocked when it was perceived as being in some way disrespectful. But again, I think he feels that it's a pri-

vacuity issue and that people should be free to practice their sex any way they choose, particularly

among consenting adults. That's just consistent with his belief system.

*What can the Nader for President campaign accom-*



But it seems to me that we're all just little teeny tiny voices crying in the wilderness, and until we learn to work together and build a broad-based coalition, we're going to remain on the fringes



plish?

We really saw it as a way to jump-start a serious third-party organizing effort—a national Presidential campaign where the candidate, frankly, is a household

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Winona LaDuke is supporting an amendment that would say that every single public policy, every regulation, every licence, every decision that is made legislatively, would have to be made with the benefit of the seventh generation in mind.

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word in this country and is the quintessential public citizen in terms of advocating for consumer rights, worker rights and so on. In many states, a third party can gain ballot access only through a Presidential campaign, only by running a President or governor in a state-wide race and getting some percentage of the vote. So we saw this from the beginning as a way to build the third party at the local and state levels. We never saw this as a way to win the presidency but as a way to build the third party so that perhaps we would have a chance to go forth in 2000 or in 2004. And in those terms we have actually already won. We started with fewer than six state parties and we've already increased that number—some states have actually gotten party status just by doing the petitioning for the candidate, and perhaps as many as 18 state parties will be in existence after the campaign because they'll get the percentage necessary to be on the ballot. That's as many as fifteen or eighteen states where we can go back and run for local offices and state-wide offices and start making a real difference in the way that public policies are decided in our local communities.

*About the Nader for President campaign, I was wondering if you could talk a little about that structure and specifically what you do in it from a day to day basis.*

When we started this campaign with Mr. Nader, his concern was that if he solicited or accepted contributions for his campaign he would jeopardize the tax-exempt status of the many non-profit interest groups that he has created over the years and they would not be able to survive without the charitable foundation donations that they get now. So that was one of the reasons that he

didn't want to run a more traditional campaign with contributions coming in from supporters. We agreed that we would go along with that, so he's not raising or spending money. In order for the Draft Nader Clearinghouse to coordinate the efforts out in the

states, we of course have to raise some funds. Not a lot, but we've raised \$20,000 or so over the last six months just to pay phone bills and pay our web page maintenance bill and that sort of thing. What we've done is we established the Clearinghouse so that there would be a national presence and a national contact point for people who wanted to be involved in the campaign.

We maintain a media presence with press releases when the candidates make significant statements about vari-

ous issues. And we frequently end up getting national media stories for the campaigns. We also are sort of a conduit for national media who want to cover local campaigns. There was also an instance recently where the Sierra Club endorsed Bill Clinton. The Sierra Club, the League of Conservation Voters, and the Clean Water Action people all endorsed Bill Clinton. So we were able to get endorsements for Nader that sort of embarrassed them at the very least. They called, they were very upset because David Brower, who is sort of Mister Sierra Club and is still on the board of directors of the Sierra Club came out and endorsed Nader. And so a number of Sierra Club members now are really giving their board a lot of heat about their endorsement.

*If the Greens ran the country, or even if they ran a city or a state, what would it look like? What would the Greens do?*

I think probably the best way to summarize it would be this Constitutional amendment that our Vice-Presidential candidate would like to see. Winona LaDuke is supporting an amendment that would say that every single public policy, every regulation, every

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In other words, it would be very future-focused...

...and these short-term profits, short-term solutions, [and] quick fixes

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licence, every decision that is made legislatively, would have to be made with the benefit of the seventh generation in mind. In other words, it would be very future-focused. And these short-term profits, short-term



solutions, [and] quick fixes would be out the door, and we would start looking at long-range effects. I think we would have a less consumer-oriented society and a more sustainable economy and a sustainable environment.

*What's your answer to the argument that liberals and leftists should vote for Clinton as the lesser of two evils just because there are all sorts of terrible things that would happen if Dole got in?*

Well, there are a lot of answers to that. I think that we've been voting using that argument for many many years. We vote for the lesser of two evils and we just keep getting evil. What's happening is that it tends to reinforce the movement to the right. I believe that a time comes when you have to vote on principle and you have to vote for what you want, not what you don't want. Now there are others who are more pragmatic than I who say, "Look, Clinton is twenty points ahead, this is a perfect time to register your opposition vote and sent a message. The last thing you want is for Clinton to get an incredible mandate for the policies that he's implemented." And I think that's a good argument too. We do not want Clinton to have a mandate, although it's clear to me that he's going to be reelected.

*After the elections, where should Greens and other leftists and liberals go from here?*

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I was very pleased with the students I met at Wesleyan and I was happy to be there. Some people have told me that Wesleyan is probably the last progressive stronghold.

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The most exciting thing that has happened in recent weeks is that we are moving forward based on this campaign, and we are working very hard to create an association of state Green Parties that will have some legitimacy at the national level. In other words, we will be able to bring the states together that are interested in working together and select a spokesperson and have some kind of national presence. I think that will give us a tremendous advantage in reaching out and being visible to the general public. We've never really done this before. There is a national Green organization but they have not been electoral and they have not recognized the state parties. So this is a way for us to establish ourselves as a very different political entity. It won't be a national party—top down, and hierarchical. It will be based in the states, and the

states will make the decisions. The model for this is the Green Federation in Europe. The Green Federation consists of the Green Parties from twenty-six

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I believe that a time comes when you have to vote on principle and you have to vote for what you want, not what you don't want.

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countries who came together three years ago and wrote their platform, their guiding principles. And they now work together to establish policy throughout Eastern and Western Europe. The first meeting is sometime next month, probably within a few weeks of the election. We've invited Mr. Nader to come, and he's indicated that if he can, he will help us organize this state association.

Connecticut, by the way, is probably going to have at least five locals. I don't know if one is going to be at Wesleyan or not, but that would be terrific if there could be a Green Party local at Wesleyan. The Green Party started on the campuses, and then it sort of moved away. Campus based organizations are great, but they tend to turn over. There's not a lot of continuity. So at some point it was necessary to ground them in the community. But now I think it's time to go back and reach out and try to make sure that there are campus groups around the country.

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*Do you have anything else you'd like to add?*

No, I have to say that I was very pleased with the students that I met at Wesleyan, and I was happy to be there. Some people have told me that Wesleyan is probably the last progressive stronghold.

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*That's arguable.*

Well, you're closer to it, and obviously you're more critical. But it is nice to see that there are campuses that are friendly to progressive causes, where the students are actually encouraged to get involved. I think it's a very precious heritage, and I know that you honor it and will see that in perseveres.

*For more information on the Nader campaign, contact the Connecticut Green Party at (560) 693-5344 or [capeconn@lbbs.org](mailto:capeconn@lbbs.org), or the national Clearinghouse at 1-888-NADER-96, <http://www.vais.net/~nader96>*





# WHY WE DON'T VOTE

## Postmodern Electoral Apathy

BY AONGUS BURKE

As I write this, members of the Wesleyan Voting Alliance are no doubt getting ready to launch an offensive against unregistered voters on this campus. Television commercials are flashing telephone numbers that people can call to register themselves. Rock the Vote booths are set up at concerts and festivals. MTV's Choose or Lose bus is headed somewhere. There is something desperate about it all. Activists, political analysts, social scientists: all wonder why Americans don't seem interested in voting any more. And all fear what this trend might mean for the future of American democracy.

In his lecture, "The March Towards Socialism," Joseph Schumpeter argued that capitalism has a tendency by its very success to destroy the social institutions and values that protect it — religion, the family, saving, private property, etc. I wonder if the American system and its ethos — is similarly a "victim" of its own success.

Let's face it: the chances of any single individual's vote affecting the outcome of an election is virtually nil. But this has always been true, so it doesn't explain why voter turnout is so low these days. Besides, most people who vote recognize that their single vote will not change the outcome of the election. So why then do people vote? There are, I'd say, two main and interrelated reasons. First, people vote in order to express their pride, solidarity, identification, etc. as a member of a group. Such identities may be based in any number of familiar social categories, including ethnicity, class, gender, race, and sexuality. Identities might also be based on ideology — one votes in order to affirm or proclaim one's status as a Democrat, a white supremacist, a libertarian, etc. People also vote to express their opposition to, even hatred of, other groups: the worker who votes to express his opposition to bourgeois rule, the Republican who votes in order to express her hatred of liberals. Voting motivated by rejection is probably more prevalent than voting based on identification. Nonetheless, these two motivations are basically flip sides of the same coin.

This model of voter motivation explains a number of things. Newly enfranchised groups tend to have a high voter turnout because the struggle for suffrage demands and indeed strengthens both group solidarity and resentment of the out-group. The model can also explain the motivations of those Americans who continue to vote. It is a truism in political science that the more involved one is in politics (and voting is clearly indicative of involvement), the more ideological one tends to be. Therefore, it seems logical to conclude that most consistent voters are voting in order to express their ideological beliefs.

One thing this suggests is that American voters are no longer voting based on social group identification, or at least not to the extent that they once were. And this is where my theory about the American system

undermining itself comes in. America atomizes. It wages war against almost every politically relevant group tie an individual might have.

It all begins in the classroom. Post-Enlightenment education encourages, indeed forces, us to look beyond and challenge the provincial values, loyalties, standards, etc. that our parents, churches, and neighborhoods instill in us. In theory, this should be replaced by a model of rational action motivated by universal values and standards of justice, perhaps tempered by loyalty to the nation. As Enlightenment elitism has come under attack within the academy, educators have increasingly abandoned the responsibility of replacing provincialism with much of anything. Students are taught there is a larger world out there that they should know about, but are left to themselves to decide where they ought to settle in that world. And so the confident individualism of Enlightenment liberalism is replaced by the anxious, rootless individualism of post-modernism.

This works almost as well in the marketplace that school grads must head to anyway. If one hasn't learned to feel atomized by the time one enters the job market, the lesson gets inculcated pretty quickly. Laborer and employer confront one another as individuals. They bargain over wages or salary with directly opposed interests. If the worker doesn't like the deal, s/he doesn't have to take the job or can leave it for something better. If the laborer ceases to be a net moneymaker for the company, s/he is terminated. Modern advertising has largely succeeded in getting us to internalize the belief that happiness can be acquired, not through our relationships with others, but through what we purchase. We retreat to our home entertainment centers and computer terminals and away from the town hall and the voting booth. In an era characterized by the collapse of moral responsibility in general, how can civic responsibility or group loyalty compete for one's time with pop culture?

My point is not to romanticize some putative golden age that preceded post-modernism and moral relativism. I am a post-modernist moral relativist. The gradual elimination of group conflict in the American polity is probably a good thing. Conflict leads to overly polarized worldviews and creates expectations that are rarely realized in victory but which are often devastatingly crushed in compromise or defeat. But diminished conflict may not bode well for participation in democratic politics. I'm not sure this is a problem that has a solution within the context of democratic politics. But, then, maybe it's not much of a problem. It's not like America is collapsing now because people aren't voting. If things do start to fall apart, if one voting group starts to oppress a non-voting one, the latter will probably begin to organize politically. Maybe it's time to reorient our thinking about non-voting and simply view it as a sign of a healthy democracy.





# PROFESSORS IN THE MAINSTREAM

## Wesleyan Faculty Electoral Participation

BY DAVID S. VINE

They wax eloquent against hegemonic discourses, argue for alternate scientific paradigms and explore Socialist theory, but when it comes to actually pulling the lever this November 5th, where do Wesleyan faculty stand? It turns out that the vast majority fall into the mainstream of U.S. politics. According to a survey of faculty electoral participation conducted by *The Hermes*, Wesleyan professors as a group prove to be unambiguously left-leaning, but by no means radical.

On October 8th, *The Hermes* distributed 66 surveys to professors in each of the University's 3 academic divisions. Based on responses representing 25% of the total, fall, faculty population of 309 (not including physical education staff), the survey suggests that faculty are, at least electorally speaking, firmly rooted in the mainstream left: The substantial majority of Wesleyan academics seem to identify themselves as Democrats (74%) and support Bill Clinton (82%) when asked respectively, "Do you identify with any political party, organization, or group..." and "...if the election were being held today, for whom would you cast your Presidential ballot?"

Although this poll is in no way an indicator of the entire realm of faculty political action, it does seem to reveal that, as a group, university faculty across the disciplines are quite ordinary aside from their striking lack of support for the Republican Party (4%) and for Bob Dole (7%). Even the most politically diverse academic division in the survey—the Social Sciences—still has two-thirds of its members supporting the Democrats and 64% backing Clinton. Moreover, while one might expect significant faculty support for alternative parties and presidential candidates, those identifying as "Independent" or having "No Party" were a distant second at 18% to professors identifying with the Democrats. Likewise, a "protest vote" like the Green Party's Ralph Nader only received support from 8% of the sample. One government professor interviewed for this article holds that, if anything, the faculty is even more centrist than the survey

would indicate. "You have a self-selection problem," the professor explained, in that many of the relatively conservative academics at Wesleyan "may feel silenced" by the university community. Feeling overwhelmed by the left on campus, some may feel it necessary to hide their political beliefs from a questionnaire of this kind.

With or without this conservative element, the faculty further falls into the mainstream of the U.S.

**PERCENTAGE OF FACULTY THAT PREFER CLINTON: 81.6**  
**PERCENTAGE THAT PREFER NADER: 7.9**  
**PERCENTAGE THAT PREFER NONE: 6.6**

electorate in expressing dissatisfaction with the political options available to

voters. In the poll's comments section, several academics detailed an unhappiness with all of the Presidential candidates and with the entire U.S. political system. Seemingly corresponding to the views of many Wesleyan students and voters around the country, one respondent wrote, "NOT HAPPY WITH ANY OF THE CANDIDATES/ CLINTON DOLE PEROT." Another explained, "Although I am *not* completely happy with the Democratic Party today...I will still vote for Clinton, *faute de mieux*. Unfortunately, there is no viable alternative in the U.S. today—I wish that

the Green Party were stronger, as it is in some European countries.

**NUMBER OF FACULTY (OUT OF 76) WHO IDENTIFY AS DEMOCRATS: 56**  
**NUMBER OF DIV 1 FACULTY (OUT OF 21) WHO IDENTIFY AS DEMOCRAT: 18**  
**NUMBER OF DIV 2 (OUT OF 28): 19**  
**NUMBER OF DIV 3 (OUT OF 27): 19**

But the prospect of Dole is just, well, *doleful*.... Whether or not they feel forced into the political center around election time, Wesleyan faculty reveal decidedly mainstream voting habits.

Given their centrist tendencies, this survey raises interesting questions about faculty members' commitment to the oft-radical ideas many profess in classes. Nonetheless, one must admit that such a poll alone cannot accurately measure the full extent or content of faculty political participation. One respondent rightly argued, "I want to question your assumption that 'participation in US politics' = 'electoral politics' and even more narrowly, voting...." True enough—mainstream electoral choices need not eliminate the possibility of deeply radical political activism. And yet, if any group is going to act concretely on its ideological beliefs in voting, who better than professors?





# A NEW UNIVERSITY

## Recreating a Learning Community

BY GARRICK WAHLSTRAND



CAMPUS ISSUES

Have you seen flyers around campus questioning Wesleyan's name as a liberal arts institution, and inviting students to study the liberal arts? Did you notice an *Argus* "Wespeak" in which was announced efforts in building "*The University*," an informal center for liberal learning focused on non-disciplinary studies, the beauty of connecting ideas from many disciplines, and the intellectual, moral, and spiritual developments of the students?

Descriptions of sample studies in *The University* include: 1.) **The Liberal Arts:** A study of the integrity of the medieval European liberal arts curriculum (Grammar, Logic, Rhetoric, Arithmetic, Geometry, Music, Astronomy); of how it prepared students for the study of Law, Medicine, and, ultimately, Theology; of how it evolved from classical Greek pedagogy; of how it mirrors classical Chinese, Indian, and African pedagogies; and of how it anticipates an integrated 21st-century pedagogy (including Linguistics, Programming, Hermeneutics, Theory of Numbers, Quantum Mechanics, Molecular Biology, Chrytallography, Acoustic String Theory, Performance Art, Cosmology); 2.) **Baseball:** Studies the game from metaphysical, sociological, micro-historical, literary, statistical, legal and aesthetic points of view. The logic of the game is shown to be reflected in the phenomenology of Charles Sanders Peirce, the fiction of Herman Melville, the metaphysics of Gertrude Stein, and the poetry of Charles Olsen. American culture is defined in terms of the cosmology and theology implicit in its national pastime.

*The University* is the recent endeavor of music professor, Jon Barlow. On the eve of his *University*, I interviewed Barlow, a man who in some circles, is respectfully called "cosmic," and in others, due to his merit as a musician, is known as the "philosopher-pianist." I wanted to know what would compel a man to set up a "university," in the presence of a larger one, and how exactly his notions concerning the liberal arts came to be.

To address these questions, Barlow highlighted a rather distinct period in Wesleyan's history; speculated on the nature and importance of the liberal arts as he understands it; described plans for his *University*; and suggested improvements for Wesleyan, some initially submitted in the form of an Academic Forum essay, but retracted at the request of an administration that found the ideas too controversial.

Barlow came to Wesleyan as a music professor in 1966 at age 24. He graduated from Cornell and had initially been studying engineering, having grown

up in coal mining camps, and from a family of, as he describes, "technocrats." He lost interest in the exclusive study of modern engineering, however, for he found "Greek science just as interesting as modern science, and just as likely to be correct in some way." But Barlow contends that his education in liberal learning did not start until he arrived at Wesleyan, where he found an unified learning community made up of professors and students who readily engaged themselves across disciplines. At the time the community was energized by professors like Louis Mink, Carl Schorske, and Bob Rosenbaum; people who were not restricted by the thinking of any one discipline and led campus wide discussion and scholarship in areas as diverse as quantum mechanics, mathematics, Proust, Joyce's *Finnegans Wake*, and the work of Levi-Strauss. In 1963-64 the experimental music composer, John Cage, was officially involved with the university through the Center for Advanced Studies, the predecessor of the Center for the Humanities (unofficially he was involved for much longer). Cage's work with the *I Ching*, acoustics and literature kept the university open to cross-discipline dialogue and had a pervasive "liberating influence on the whole campus." Finally Barlow learned much by way of the world music department, "a meta-discipline," where the music required one to learn its cultural context. But Barlow sees much of this as having changed, and perceives there to be a serious lack of a campus-wide community that could support the education of any newcomer to the school, professor or student. This observation is Barlow's impetus to build the *University*.

Barlow's ideas, reflected in the quality of his voice, are thoughtful and measured. He often uses phrases like "if that were the case, then," setting up philosophical propositions only to deliver the particular piece of information. He is not afraid to point, as he often does, to the mysterious or profound or esoteric. In fact Barlow points to the "mysterious dimensions" of some texts as an aspect of their applicability to liberal learning.

Another thing that came to mind during the first part of this interview was Barlow's presupposition that his liberal education by the Wesleyan community upon his arrival was an inherently good thing, thus begging the question of the importance and the definition of a liberal arts education. Finally, I considered the value of a text or even larger body of material as a medium of dialogue for all members of the Wesleyan community. I wonder whether Wesleyan has any unifying medium now. Multiculturalism and tolerance are

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two aspects that come close in at least providing boundaries or criteria for the medium, but their essentialist stances at the most basic levels usually provide little else for an entire diverse Wesleyan community to take part in.

The second part of the interview started with the question, "What is liberal learning?" "I don't have an answer to that one," Barlow says, which is to be expected this is one of the first things he says in his literature about possibilities for the *University*. Barlow answers the question by prefacing his statement that his remarks are guesses and could change if someone were to ask him again: "The first goal of liberal learning is wisdom; the second is preparation." Liberal learning is comprised of areas of study "that have circularities built into them." He explains that in his teaching of Music 101, his encounters with the most

Barlow perceives there to be a serious lack of a campus-wide community that could support the education of any newcomer to the school, professor or student.

elementary parts of theory are profound and mysterious because he can not fully grasp that which he attempts to explain to the class, questions that no theorist can fully explain. Regardless of where you are in music the basics will always be mysterious and thus the learning of music is recycled. Math, for Barlow, is that way too. To say, after twelve years of mathematics (another example Barlow uses), "I have no idea what  $2+2=4$  means," points to the circularities in math. In this way liberal learning is in contrast to those studies that are linear: *where, as Barlow explains, you learn a, then b, then c, all the way up to z and say 'well now I have learned everything that needs to be learned.' Once you have got up to p there is no interest in going back to a. Consequently it is hard to be a teacher of such disciplines because it is hard to be very enthusiastic about teaching a when you are already up at p.*

The seemingly intrinsic inability to ever fully grasp the matter at hand, the circularities of liberal learning, may at first seem daunting. But it is also the acceptance and the subsequent moving around these circles that are a characteristic of liberal learning. Here is how Barlow ties it together: *If wisdom (or enlightenment) is the ultimate goal and preparation is a preliminary goal, I think liberal learning works toward both of these. And that might seem contradictory if it weren't for the fact, that being wise and preparing yourself to do other things feed into each other and are, in fact, the same thing. By 'preparing yourself to do other things,' I mean preparing yourself to go out in the world to do something useful; or going on to study a profession (law, medicine). How do you prepare yourself to that, how do you prepare your*

*mind and spirit to go on in that way? That is more or less what the liberal arts have always meant in European spheres: that's what they were in the Middle Ages... you studied the liberal arts in order to prepare to go on to other things and ultimately, in that case theology, which is wisdom. If that were just a linear process and once you got to the point of directly addressing a profession, or even beyond that, wisdom, and then you were to look back on your liberal arts education with only sentiment as something that you are now far beyond, then it wouldn't be something terribly interesting. But it doesn't go that way. The challenge in teaching the liberal arts is that you're recycling wisdom back through this preliminary stage. It seems that you'd want to go from the preliminary preparation of mind and spirit, through professional training, to wisdom; and yet you realize that in order to accomplish that first step you either have to be wise yourself (you have to come by it naturally) or you need to be in the hands of a wise teacher. Wisdom is at issue even in that first preliminary step. Again you have that circularity. And, although, on another occasion I might say something entirely different about liberal learning, at the moment I think I'd point to that circularity...*

Another aspect of liberal learning is the unconventional relationship between teacher and student. *Because wisdom must be recycled from the most basic stages of the studies and back again, the conception of liberal learning is totally involved with teaching... it would be more accurate to say 'liberal/teaching.' It is as important to be a liberal teacher as it is to be a liberal learner in the sense that it is as fundamental to the concept of education that we are talking about. It is characteristic of the liberal learning environment that everyone, at some time, finds themselves in both corners.* In this regard, it is a proposal of *The University* that a foundational text of liberal arts, Joyce's *Finnegans Wake*, be read communally.

The next set of questions addressed his up and coming *University*. In a statement sent to those interested, Barlow writes, "The *University* is a clearing house for non-departmental, non-disciplinary studies. It facilitates formal and informal dialogues, discussions, seminars and publications devoted to the liberal arts. It supports liberal learning for the sake of liberal learning... The *University* is a place where non-disciplinary subjects and discourses are connected with non-disciplinary subjects and discourses... No one pays or is paid to participate in the *University*. No formal credit is given by Wesleyan or is accepted by members of the *University* for work done under the auspices of the *University*."

Clearly the *University* is outside the normal academic structure of Wesleyan. Further, Barlow sees this very unofficial status as crucial to its longevity, in





both its ability to stay in existence (Barlow fears it might be prevented if he were to try to secure it official status), and its ability to maintain the integrity of a non-disciplinary approach to any of the broad content studied. *When I say non-disciplinary, I am taking on the simply silly idea that everything that a member of this learning community might want to study has to be found or could be immediately added to the curricula of one of the thirty-two or so departments and programs we have. It is as if the field of learning is a Venn diagram in which there are thirty-two minuscule circles making up less than one percent, but nonetheless pretending those circles cover the totality. The University is an opportunity to take on that stuff. It is not my intention to fill up the space with more tiny circles. The value of the study comes from studying the nondisciplinized space without disciplinizing it (which is contrary to everything we experience about education up to the sixth grade).* One of Barlow's ideas for the university is hands-on participation in elementary education: "It is ironic but also beautiful that the nearest thing to fully realized liberal learning in our society is the learning going on in well-conducted elementary classrooms."

My final set of questions concerned how Barlow saw Wesleyan university. What would he change about the school? Were there any aspects of the *University* that could be adopted by Wes? What were the concerns of his retracted Academic Forum essay?

Barlow sees little of the *University* that could be adopted by Wes, partially due to the latter's lack of interest. Barlow proposed something very similar, ten years ago to the Educational Policy Committee and they refused to even give him an answer. Further when, in his Academic Forum essay, he proposed that professors be allowed to teach one non-departmentally-approved course a year, he knew that faculty, in their own self-interest, would be fundamentally opposed to such an idea. Barlow explains: *the faculty's primary affiliation is with their professional discipline, the local representative of which is their department. Their secondary affiliation is with Wesleyan; they always put their department before the school because their department represents their profession. The ongoing struggle for resources between departments to support their departmental programs is a way that will establish their legitimacy in professional society. General education is an opposed interest to departmental programs in this regard. Hence the faculty will always support their department in the battle for resources, particularly in the case of personnel. Every department routinely opposes any request by the university to free up personnel for teaching of the general sort. They will always say 'no we can't afford that, we do not have enough personnel.'* It is, in a sense, labor strategy. The faculty will always publicly support the department in the debates between the

*university and departments. There is still a considerable amount of faculty that are for it (being allowed to teach a non-departmentally-approved course a year), but who could never support it in a public meeting because they would be ostracized by their departments. For example, in the late seventies there was a proposal known as the Abelow proposal which called for university seminars for first-year students, which would take place outside of normal departmental structures. It was discussed by the Educational Policy Committee and they invited in groups of chairs, ten at a time. I was chair of the Music department at the time. The proposal would have used different teaching personnel from each department. Each faculty head was asked what they thought of the idea and each one, including myself, having been told what to say by my*

## Filling all the productive, available hours of a student's day with work is contrary to education

*department, said 'speaking for the department of x, this is a terrible idea, it is a totally unjustified attempt to remove teaching power from my department and we'll oppose it at every step.' And every one of them, then said, 'speaking personally, I think it's a great idea.'*

Finally Barlow speaks to another issue with which I readily agree: Barlow believes that filling all the productive, available hours of a student's day with work is wrong and contrary to education. He would like to see at least half the available time made free of academic work, in order that the student might pursue their own research or manage their own side-studies. Personally, I know that to do all the work and reading assigned in all my courses, even for the most basic levels of comprehension, would of necessity restrict my interaction with my peers which is invaluable in informing my education within the classroom and outside of it. There are some that do find the time and patience to do all the work. For me, however, my unwillingness to enslave myself to material that already has built-in dissension, by way of departmental discursive standards, yields a very stale classroom environment, antithetical to original thought; especially under the unrelenting strain of the preliminary chore of absorbing the range of initial material. So now, to write papers, I must develop schizophrenic personalities premised in caring for a course that makes room for little original thought in the first place.

So I will take part in Barlow's *University* this November, at once excited to test out new waters of Wesleyan and see where the community of the *University* will take me. I am also somewhat reserved, not knowing if my recent dissatisfaction in the classroom says something more profound about my own current receptivity to academics, departmentalized or not.







# Community and Conformity

## The Bruderhof Try to Live up to Their Ideals

BY TREVOR GRIFFEY

Of all the groups that attended Wesleyan's rally in support of Mumia Abu-Jamal last semester, one in particular stood out: the representatives of the Deer Spring Bruderhof. Forty or fifty of them came in a big yellow school bus, making them the strongest contingent of non-Wesleyan students to attend the rally. The men all wore black pants, sneakers, and tucked-in plaid shirts. The women all wore long dresses and head coverings, most of which were blue, and they distributed literature promoting a youth conference on September 20th stating that we are living in a politically unjust world in which "sexual liberation has only enslaved us."



Members of the Bruderhof protesting the Death penalty

At the time, I thought them odd, and wondered who they were. I quickly forgot about them though, only to remember them when I found their name listed in the Federation of Intentional Communities' directory of members. It turns out that the Deer Spring Bruderhof, located an hour and a half away in Norfolk, Connecticut, is a politically active Christian commune. And so, having an interest in the relationship between political movements, communes, and religion, and not having much else to do one weekend, I decided to go to the youth conference that they had advertised at the

Mumia rally. I brought a tape recorder to do a radio journalism piece on my experiences. And while I was there for only two days, the experience gave me much to think about, and even more to worry about.

Immediately following World War I, a group of German youths founded The Bruderhof, German for "brotherhood." It was an intentional community whose members sought to live a more peaceful and fulfilling life one which seemed antithetical to more mainstream modes of life which were associated with supporting the war. Seeking support only a few years after its creation, it merged with a Hutterite community, giving it a decidedly Christian tone. The Nazis exiled the group to England for being pacifist in 1937, and the English exiled them to Paraguay soon after for being German. In the late 1950s, the group went through major organizational turmoil, kicked out nearly 600 of its then 1400 members, and moved to the United States and England. It has been growing ever since, and now has approximately 2,500 members in seven communities world wide—six in the north-eastern US and one in England.

The Bruderhof communities are first and foremost religious communities. All members share the same religious beliefs, and the Bible provides justification for most of the significant political and social stands members of the community take within their own lives and without. But Bruderhof Christianity differs in important respects from Religious Right politics, or even from more traditional interpretations of the Bible. Members place particular on the teachings of the Sermon on the Mount—in loving one's friends, family, neighbors, and even one's enemies. And Bruderhof members interpret this love as having specific lifestyle implications for them: absolute pacifism and non-violence toward other humans, opposition to the death penalty, disdain for private property, opposition to abortion, and support for "family values."

This unusual combination of positions often characterized as leftist and, in the case of private property, radical, combined with other stereotypically right wing stands has made the Bruderhof quite an anomaly in political terms. Yet members contend that their stands are consistent and linked in crucial ways which others often fail to grasp. Bruderhof members believe that most, if not all wars are fought for the sole purpose of increasing one group's material wealth by taking from another; that gross inequalities in wealth make the wealthy selfish and the poor suffer unnecessarily; that





one cannot oppose the death penalty and support abortion; and that a strong family with well-defined gender roles is the basis for the loving community in the model of the Kingdom of God.

And while I cannot say that I agree personally with all their beliefs, it seemed to me in the first half day that I spent at Deer Spring that this place was somewhat of an idyllic community.

First and foremost, people were very kind to me and very tolerant of my philosophical differences with them. There was a box with my name on it containing home made cookies, brownies and a candle waiting for me on my pillow when I arrived. People were extremely friendly, and seemed happy to have visitors. There were presentations by school children, singing, and later in the evening, engaged discussion about how to live responsibly and lovingly in a seemingly corrupt world. Never had I been in a place where people criticized so much of the daily going on of society and seemed to be doing something to avoid hypocrisy at the same time. While I could not relate to certain beliefs of theirs, I respected their attempt to create a community which better reflected their beliefs, which gave them both joy and purpose and seemed totally peaceful while remembering and caring about the issues still facing those not in their community.

And on a certain level, the Bruderhof community is relatively successful at what its members say its goals are. The Bruderhof run a profitable business of manufacturing furniture for children and the disabled. In large part from this income, all at the Bruderhof are fed, all are clothed, all are housed, and all, except for children and the elderly, work equal hours—even with opportunities to change jobs. No elderly are sent to retirement homes but rather are taken care of by members of the Bruderhof or by nurses hired by the community. The young are schooled in Bruderhof schools until high school age. And those who leave to go to college may even have their college paid for by the community. Meals are often held in the communal dining hall, and there are regular governance meetings in which all major decisions are made by consensus. The community also has a publishing company and a periodical, and is actively engaged in trying to free Mumia Abu-Jamal.

But to say the least, this lifestyle is not without its sacrifices. Bruderhof members distance themselves from contemporary capitalist society because, among other things, it thrives on selfish competition. It is this selfishness, they say, which makes people want to have more money than others, that makes them engage in what the economist Thorstein Veblen called conspicuous consumption, that makes them act on their individual desires regardless of possible harm for the society as a whole. And so, to counter the evil of selfishness, Bruderhof life is specifically based on individuals freely making their interests those of the community.

To become a Bruderhof member, one has to have similar religious beliefs and be deemed fit to live in the

Bruderhof way. This is a serious task because all Bruderhof members make lifetime commitments to being a part of the Bruderhof. Upon entering, they give all personal possessions to the community, are expected to follow the community's general religious principles, and must move upon request to any of the Bruderhof's seven communities which need members. On a more mundane level, all members wear identical clothing, jobs are coordinated on the basis of gender and skill and less on personal interest (men do factory, maintenance and farm work while women rear children and cook), and much of the social life is pre-planned. Engagement in these activities shows individual commitment to the well being of the group.

As I inquired about some aspects of the Bruderhof life, I seemed to make some people uncomfortable. They told me that the Deer Spring community had entertained many journalists and even professors only to receive negative press—in particular, they have been labeled a cult.

While this initially surprised me and meant nothing to me, I learned little by little why people might make these accusations.

Most of the members of the Bruderhof were born into the community. Partially because there is no contraception allowed, Bruderhof families are unusually large, containing four to twelve children per couple. Children are raised in Bruderhof schools until high school age, and then go to high school with a couple dozen other members, each day returning and immediately talking with an adult member to assess any problems with the experience. After high school, some immediately join the community, others do worldwide Christian community service projects for a year, and some go to college (only professional schools—members receive no liberal arts funding unless the community feels that it can get a return on its investment). But this is often a difficult experience. Before graduating from high school, few have ever been independent of the community, have ever had access to television or radio, or had easy access to many books other than the ones published by the community. The only news the community receives is in abstracts of New York Times front page articles. And most people have little if any family outside the community. The end result is that roughly eighty percent of children from the community return to become lifetime members. And with family size roughly averaging around seven including parents, this means that the Bruderhof communities have no need to recruit members from the outside.

This aspect of Bruderhof life would be fine were it not for a serious lack of diversity of thought and individuality within the communities (I was assured that all of the seven communities are basically the same). Every aspect of life at "the Hof" is pre-organized and generally the same for everyone. People work the same number of hours at the same times of day, have meals with their families at the designated time, have communal meals together when they are planned, fol-





low the same religious teachings, dress the same, and even have social activities planned as entire community events. To not participate fully in these activities is to not be committed to the group, and could be the basis for reprimand and possibly, if the divergence is great, expulsion from the community without monetary compensation for work done and even without one's family. This possibility, according to Ramone Sender, the founder of a group for former Bruderhof members, has made universal consensus meetings totally undemocratic places, in which people are scared to voice different opinions. Further, because there is a rule that no one may say anything disrespectful about another person except in that person's presence, anyone with complaints about leadership is forced to voice them alone to someone with the power to expel the member from meetings and even the community. In other words, it is a veritable impossibility, according to Sender, to organize any dissent or change from within the community. Further, those who organize outside of the community are just as intimidated. Members who are expelled are refused visitation rights to see their families if they are thought to have even read a newsletter sent by Sender's organization.

As I reflected on these issues, I began to feel uncomfortable with being at Deer Spring. No women and only a few powerful men know how to dial out of the Deer Spring phone system. There are night watches done only by men to keep the community safe and make sure everyone's in bed getting a good amount of sleep for the next day. Premarital sexual relations are not only disallowed but the leadership tell married couples how they may and may not have sex.

Their philosophy was one of free brotherly love. Their lifestyle was based on free speech in consensus meetings and the freedom to choose that lifestyle at adult age. Their songs all had lyrics praising freedom, praising love, praising God, and occasionally disdaining the cold outside world. But after a while, much felt disingenuous to me— everything mandatory, everything routine, everything the same, nothing spontaneous or full of passion. Initially, I respected them greatly. But what were their ideals of brotherly love if they did not allow homosexuality or equality of opportunity for different genders? What were their ideals of freedom if one grew up without diversity of opinion or experience, and labeled individuality as selfish? And what is this community, really, if it subverts what it

claims to be founded on?

I had more than just philosophical reasons for being uncomfortable, however.

In my first two years at Wesleyan, I found the cynicism and constant complaining/critiquing to be too much for me, and started seriously exploring mystic philosophy and poetry as havens from this world. I wanted to develop a sense of value, in particular for appreciation and love and connection in contrast to my already well developed language for describing difference, alienation, and inconsistency. And in exploring my new found appreciation for life, friends, my body, and even my studies, I found myself becoming more and more interested in socialism (or economic

justice), pacifism, political justice, and coherent communities which might better bring these ideals to fruition. And so when I found that the Bruderhof had quite similar views to mine in terms of politics, I was initially encouraged. But what happened? I became discouraged as I pondered whether Bruderhof life is the ultimate extension of my communist/religious ideals. And, I continued to wonder, how would a thoughtful Bruderhof member critique my life?

They claimed to be free but seemed to have enslaved themselves to monotony, uncreativity, sexual prudence, conformity, control, and a fear of dissent. Their world seemed absurd as they sang one way but tragically acted in exactly the opposite manner. But what of me? What of my ideals, what of my culture?

I am a hypocrite, full of lofty idealism about the possibility of radical social change but tolerant of much of that which I despise in my everyday life. I talk a great deal about what I hope to do and accomplish, but I engage in activities which contradict those very things I say I am supporting. My opinions are for the most part philosophically grounded, but not practically well informed. I say I don't care what other people think of me, only to find that the times when I do are often when I receive the most criticism from my peers. I go through the motions of activities which are supposed to be meaningful expressions of my being



## Youth:

*A force for change!*

**How can we make a positive impact in the world and find hope for our generation and the future?**

- Our country is in a state of collapse: socially, politically, and morally.
- Our personal lives are superficial and purposeless.
- We live in a culture of fear and death.

*It's time for change!*

If you are concerned and are looking for ways that YOU can change the cycles of injustice and despair of our day, join us for a weekend to discuss:

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•Race Equality •Homest Relationships •Education with a purpose  
•Political and social activism ... and other topics.

We will also take time to include activities such as softball, volleyball, hiking, folk music, folk dancing and singing.



when I feel meaningless. I have sometimes gotten my entertainment with herds at predetermined times. I used to get my politics from TV rather than from my own reflection. I have friends and family whom I know suffer but I rarely offer my help. And often out of fear, or misunderstanding, I feel very little compassion for some of my enemies.

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**Because there is a rule that no one may say anything disrespectful about another person except in that person's presence, anyone with complaints about leadership is forced to voice them alone to someone with the power to expel the member from the community.**

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In fact, I could find only one significant general difference between me and the Bruderhof at Deer Spring. No Bruderhof member wanted to complain about the organization of the community—their own inability to be fully self-sacrificing, they told me, were what made the community imperfect. Individuality itself was targeted by the Bruderhof as the root of their own and the world's problems. And while I agree that a certain kind of individuality will manifest itself in selfishness and egotism, individual feeling and expression are also sources of immense joy, love, and celebration. They are what allow for the giving and community which the Bruderhof seek, and without them, religious sentiments would be empty formalities, politics possibly quite destructive, friendships would be meaningless, and hypocrisy would seem insurmountable. Individually felt values are the foundation of the conscience. And while I doubt that Bruderhof members have lost these feelings, the hostility to non-conformist actions in their community would suggest, to me, that their consciences are being stifled by a fear of difference. Brotherly love, as far as I'm concerned, cannot be enforced, and cannot take shape in one form for all people.

This is what bothered me during my visit: the regulated conscience is the foundation for totalitarianism. Bruderhof members are pacifists. They are idealists. They are parents. They suffer. Just like us. But I worry: how far could they possibly allow their ideals to be corrupted and still keep saying that what they're doing is right? How much will they ignore their own personal feelings for what is right and what is wrong for the sake of the group?

I worry less about the Bruderhof, however, and more about what they may show us about our future. The US does not seem far from the kind of social instability that has made people willing to accept almost total loss of individual power to political elites. The Bruderhof say that our culture is materialistic, racist,

violent, unspiritual, environmentally unsustainable, and our communities, our schools, and even our families are in crisis. Who could disagree? In such times, especially as things get worse, totalitarian solutions will seem more attractive. European history, even the Bruderhof themselves, are a testament to this. Yet it is under totalitarian conditions (bastardized democracies as well as dictatorships) that some of the most heinous atrocities in human history have been committed. The Bruderhof manages its members' personal lives and can expel those who do not seem to live for the group. Governments of a larger scale than the Bruderhof, usually without the power to expel members, have tortured "subversives" and have created prisons, slave labor camps, and mass execution camps.

This is not to say the pacifists such as the Bruderhof would ever engage in such activities. But the Bruderhof solution to human misery, the giving of individual autonomy to the greater good as defined by the state, has been a disaster in the past and threatens to be one in the future as well.

At the Bruderhof, it would seem that the conscience is managed to tolerate what those outside the community have found destestable (lack of personal autonomy, for instance). Yet are we much better if we willfully *ignore* our consciences. We are entering very difficult times because of overpopulation, environmental problems, social upheaval, and the corruption of democracy by corporate interests. And while hyper-idealism may blind people to the inequities of their proposed solutions as it has at the Bruderhof, much of those in the US seem to have the opposite problem: few really think that radical change is possible. There is a great deal of resignation about any attempt to radically address these problems after the idealism of the 1960s was unable to change everything instantly. Many know something is wrong, but continue with destructive lifestyle choices. In short, there is a tendency, I believe, for youth and even adults today to say that our ideals demand too much, that we cannot constructively act on our conscience in political areas or even our own habits so there's no use trying. We may not be forced to ignore our consciences, but there is a trend of ignoring them none the less. The question which bothered me while I was at Deer Spring thus recurs: how different are we from the Bruderhof?

*This essay makes some assumptions about the Bruderhof based on accounts of former members and my personal experiences that I believe to be accurate extrapolations from the material given, but may not be perfectly so. For more information from the Bruderhof, their web site is <http://www.bruderhof.org>. For information about the group of former members which accuses the Bruderhof of being totalitarian in their organization, contact Keep In Touch at <http://www.matisse.net/~peregrin>.*







# ONCE A VICTIM

## Take Back the Night Falls Short of its Mission

BY CATHERINE HERDLICK & JOSH HECHT

On Friday, October 4th over 500 men and women participated in Wesleyan's ninth Take Back the Night march. The goal was to empower women and raise awareness. But though there were speak-outs, chanting, and women's singing groups, many people were left unfulfilled. Organizers saw the event as a success, but we observed several fundamental problems.

To us, the most basic problem with Take Back the Night is what seems a dual mission: the raising of awareness regarding sexual violence and the empowerment of women. As the night progressed, these two missions ended up bringing each other down. The march reached few besides those present. There were over 500 people present, but most of them were not the students who needed their awareness raised. The march then failed to reach the majority of those on campus who either did not know of the march or chose not to participate in it. The march reached either the off-campus housing or the Foss dorms and Clark, thus missing the vast majority of the Wesleyan community. In addition to not covering the Wesleyan campus in its entirety, the march failed to reach the greater Middletown community at all.

Compare this to last year's Take Back the Night march at NYU. At NYU, the event traveled passed all of the major dormitories, as well as several blocks in New York City's Greenwich Village where there were no university buildings. In this way awareness was promoted among both the students and the community at large, as many people leaned out of their windows to see what they heard below. Indeed, it seemed that one could not avoid noticing the large gathering as it passed from street to street. It is this awareness that leads to consideration and discussion of the issue at hand; it is this awareness that Wesleyan failed to raise.

The other goal, female empowerment, was similarly unmet. At each of the stops the march made, participants formed a circle creating a "Safe Space" of confidentiality and support where women could speak about their personal experiences with sexual violence and assault. Men were not allowed to speak. As the third circle was formed, the marchers counted off. They numbered 541. Before such a large group, women were asked to share what must be among their most intimate experiences. SaSaDi Booth '98, a Take Back the Night organizer, said that the goals of these speak-outs were to provide a therapeutic outlet for victims and to empower women. The result, however, was three-fold. In the first place, sympathy and spectacle took the place of therapy. One wondered how there could ever be therapy in such a large group and with no immediate feedback. The real therapy occurred following the march at the smaller discussion groups. Instead, the centers of the circle became a stage and we were all voyeurs congratulating each other and reveling in our motherliness.

There was also a certain glamour in the stories told. Women were applauded for telling their stories, and many who had no story to tell searched their experiences for something they could possibly contribute. There was almost a pressure to offer a performance of

one's own, and many women felt alienated when they had none to offer. So many stories were shared in such a similar way, that another effect was desensitization of the audience, the exact opposite of what a night of awareness and empowerment should produce. The stories begin to sound the same, many using the same catch phrases ("I wasn't planning to speak out tonight, but . . ."). Further, when one hears so many such stories, it becomes no surprise when one meets a new victim.

Thus women "embrace the mantle of victim status," as Katie Roiphe phrases it in *The Morning After: Sex, Fear, and Feminism*. The goal of the evening was empowerment, yet how is one empowered by proclaiming one's victimhood? Victimhood is not empowering until it has been overcome, and these circles do nothing to overcome it. Rather, they return us to it and celebrate it, speak out after speak out, year after year. And this sensation is not limited to the speakers; everyone at the march leaves the circle "knowing" that women are inherently victims. Remember, after all, the focus of the evening is how women are made to be victims.

Thus, these stories serve only to promote the sense of women's victimization. As woman after woman came forward to share her experience, each proclaimed her victim status. When each concluded, the audience offered their pity and she gladly accepted it. Moreover, it was not just her story itself that garnered our pity, but the fact that she "has been silenced by society" and needs this "Safe Space" in order to finally speak out. Here again we see the woman portrayed as helpless. She has no voice until it is offered in an organized rally by hundreds of strangers. It is easier to speak as a victim than as a woman. Her silence is her strength. The only power she has here comes from her victim status. The only reason she is allowed to speak is because she is a victim, not because she is a woman. Thus throughout the night, we see women projecting a helpless, victimized image of themselves to anyone who will listen.

How then can we change this unintended result? We feel the answer is to separate the march from the speak-outs. The march, with the goal of empowerment and awareness, should be a show of unity behind the women's movement, and truly proclaim women's strength. In addition it must pass through the entire campus, thereby raising awareness within the Wesleyan student-body, and through Middletown as well. Awareness and enlightenment need to be spread throughout our entire community, which extends far beyond the campus. The speak-outs should be relegated to the more intimate discussion groups that follow the march. It is here that women can get the feedback that is so therapeutic. These discussion groups would not glorify their victimization, which is very real, but would instead offer a beneficial way through and above their tragedy. These changes would help Take Back the Night better achieve its all-important mission..





# TAKE BACK THE NIGHT: MISSION ACCOMPLISHED

## A Response to "Once a Victim"

BY LAURA CLAWSON



CAMPUS ISSUES

I have never been to a Take Back the Night march, and I have not read all of Katie Roiphe's The Morning After: Sex, Fear, and Feminism, the vile book which informs Catherine Herdlick and Josh Hecht's critique of Wesleyan's recent Take Back the Night march. So perhaps I am not the person to be responding to their piece, or to Roiphe's arguments more generally. Nonetheless, I feel that "Take Back the Night Falls Short of Its Mission" requires some response, both for the critique it directs specifically at Wesleyan's march and for the larger argument about what Roiphe calls "rape-crisis feminism."

Herdlick and Hecht call for a number of specific changes to be made to Wesleyan's Take Back the Night. First, they feel that the march "must pass through the entire campus, thereby raising awareness within the Wesleyan student body, and through Middletown as well. Awareness and enlightenment needs to be spread throughout our entire community." There are two things to be said about this. First, a march that covered that much ground would be really tiring, and would lose much of its energy and many of its participants. This may seem like a minor and superficial concern, but would the march have the same power if it was composed of people straggling limply along, chanting with used-up voices?

More closely connected to the march's purpose, this statement seems to assume that a march is in itself educational, as if a potential rapist sitting in his room will hear a group of people yelling, "Yes means yes and no means no!" and think to himself, "My god, it does, doesn't it? From now on, I will act on this knowledge!" A march for any purpose is a show of strength which will, hopefully, be a base for ongoing educational efforts. If nothing happens after a march, the march has failed, no matter how much of campus it covered. Likewise, if a march only went from Olin to the Campus Center, but was followed by weeks of education and organizing against sexual violence, it would have been a success.

In my view, this is a relatively minor issue. I am, however, deeply disturbed, even horrified, by Herdlick and Hecht's other conclusion and the motivation behind it, which is that:

"the speak-outs should be relegated to the more intimate discussion groups that follow the march. It is here that women can get the feedback that is so therapeutic. These discussion groups would not glorify their victimization, which is very real, but would instead offer a beneficial way through and above, their tragedy."


If this suggestion were adhered to, it would rob Take Back the Night of its effectiveness and contribute to a view of women as victims more than anything else I

can think of.

A Take Back the Night organizer said that, "the goals of these speak-outs were to provide a therapeutic outlet for victims and to empower women." In Herdlick and Hecht's view, then, the speak-outs were a failure because "one wondered how there could ever be therapy in such a large group and with no immediate feedback." This, I would argue, is a simplification of the possible meanings of therapy, in which therapy is seen only as a means to adjust to and find accommodation for personal, individual problems. Under most circumstances, that is the meaning of therapy. In this case, though, it undermines the intent of Take Back the Night and, more than anything that happens in the march or speak-out, makes women into victims.

Take Back the Night events are intended to show that violence against women, particularly sexual violence, is common and that, because of this, the women to whom it happens are not alone in the experience of violence or the fight against it. If you relegate women's stories to small groups that would "offer a beneficial way through and above their tragedy," you destroy the basis for a social movement that might prevent further such "tragedies" and you tell women that rape is something to work through in relative privacy rather than to speak about publicly. We tend to remain silent about those things of which we are ashamed. Is the implication here that women should be ashamed of having been raped or assaulted?

It also strikes me as odd that, having harshly criticized Take Back the Night for what they see as celebrating victimhood, Herdlick and Hecht should then conclude that sexual violence does produce "very real" victimization, even "tragedy." Why this division between what is acceptable or right in small groups and before large audiences? If it is not acceptable to be a victim in front of 500 supportive people, why is it desirable to be a victim in conversation with 10 supportive people? I do not know what was said at this particular Take Back the Night event, but I am friends with, the student of, and the daughter of many feminists, and I have never heard any of them speak of women who have been raped or assaulted as victims in the way Herdlick and Hecht do in the process of critiquing Take Back the Night.

It seems to me that rape happens—often and everywhere—and that for this to end, we must all face it, publicly and unflinchingly. Then we must act to end it. But in the mean time, while it still happens every day, it must cease to be the shameful, unspeakable thing that it once was. Take Back the Night events are an opportunity for women to refuse to be ashamed, to refuse to be alone, and to insist that things can be changed. 

HERMES November, 1996





# EMBRACING THE NERD WITHIN

Say it loud, say it proud: "I'm a Dork!"

BY MONIQUE DAVIAU

Lately I have found myself having a great deal of Nerd Pride. The thought process by which I have arrived at this new-found pride is both liberating and offensive. As if by virtue of the fact that because I was a social outcast during the K-8 years who read lots of books and was ten inches taller than everyone else, I am now a superior person. I also find myself judging others based on a system not unlike that one used to judge me and my fellow nerds: arbitrary assumptions. In a sick system of approval, I'll think to myself,

We grew up with the message that being a nerd was undesirable, and hearing that message repeatedly has often resulted in a backlash in the nerd community

"she/he seems to have that 'I was popular as a kid—I received Valentines consistently from an early age' aura. I think I'll hate her/him." That isn't something to be proud of, but then again neither is destroying another person's self-esteem at a ripe and impressionable age. I often share the following story as the boo-hoo testament to the torture we nerds succumbed to.

It was fifth grade. We were out on the playing field practicing the ancient form of torture known as Picking Teams. My good friend and fellow nerd Jennie was one of the Team Captains this particular PE. I felt safe in knowing that today would be the first, and probably last day that I would not be chosen last for teams. We were friends, and friends didn't do stuff like that to each other.

The calling of the names began, and not surprisingly, her first choice was a popular athletic boy in our

class. For the sake of winning, it was a necessary choice, as was her second draft, a boy of equal athletic ability. The names were flying by in what in my eyes was our fifth grade class's social pecking order. By the time she called my name, third from the bottom, I was outraged. I asked her why she picked me just one

place above Billy the Booker Eater and John the Butt Picker. "Because," she said as if I already knew. "if everyone knew you were on my team, they wouldn't have wanted to be on it."

She was right. And ten years later, at the ripe old age of twenty, I still often believe that if everyone knew I was on a team, they wouldn't want to be on it, even in the company of other predetermined nerds. A model of the Nerd Pride movement would be members wearing identifying nametags or at least preface conversations with the phrase "I don't think you're a loser."

"Nerd" is a term that is left up to much interpretation. Not everyone is comfortable with the term, or the concept. I understand that many nerds would like to forget the past and move on. I myself subscribed to that ideology at one time.

However, I feel that Wesleyan offers a unique forum to express nerdiness in its most glorious natural state. In the spirit of shared experiences, I asked a few Nerd Pride supporters about their own nerd histories. "Where are my glasses?" responded Sarah Wilkes, '00, fumbling blindly for them, as if it were a splendid testament to her own nerdiness. After locating her glasses, she added, "This place is truly liberating for us nerds; there are 3000 ways to be a dork at Wesleyan."

Over the past few years, pop culture has been glorifying the nerd stereotype. Nerd Chic was an oxymoron up until about 1991, when youthful consumers began to flock to the nearest Urban Outfitters to buy a new pair of high-water brown corduroy pants or a tight t-shirt with one of those '70s iron-ons. The pop-

Over the past few years, pop culture has been glorifying the nerd stereotype.

ularity of music by nerds has also contributed to Nerd Chic, dating as far back as Buddy Holly, more recently with nerd-music outfits like Man... or Astroman? and They Might Be Giants. This may be well and good for the 10th grader in dire need of a date for the prom, but little do they know they are co-opting an under-



represented culture.

Other nerd-related trends have sprung up, such as what may be known as Nerd-core, which holds the nerd-pride philosophy, yet exaggerates the stereotype. In the words of a Wesleyan nerd who wishes to remain anonymous, "The reason Nerd-Core has gotten popular among men is that the whole Sensitive Male thing got played out after the eighties, because Sensitive Male became associated with being sleazy and insincere or being gay. So the only place that these guys had to turn was the established nerd stereotype, because nerds can't be gay because they have no fashion sense." Let me just qualify that by saying that nerds can in fact be gay, and can also have some fashion sense.

We grew up with the message that being a nerd was undesirable, and hearing that message repeatedly has often resulted in a backlash in the nerd community. What I would like to see is a beautiful, flourishing nerd dating scene, except in many cases the men ruin it. The guys that were nerds way back when often find their niche in college and become cool. Their dorky musical taste is suddenly deemed cool and their once-geeky appearance is now judged as cute by the women who dared not give them a Valentine in fifth grade. You'd think that these dweebs would remain loyal to the girls who deigned to be seen eating with them in

the cafeteria, but they usually flock to the cute girls who have recently discovered just how righteous they are. They become cultural artifacts with no sense of history at the drop of a hat. Now that they are buying ice cream for the former cheerleader in those high-water corduroy pants, they feel no need to perpetuate culture; to marry nerd women and have little nerd babies and populate the planet with nerds so that someday there will be a nerd faction so mighty, so abounding, so powerful, that Nerddom as we know it

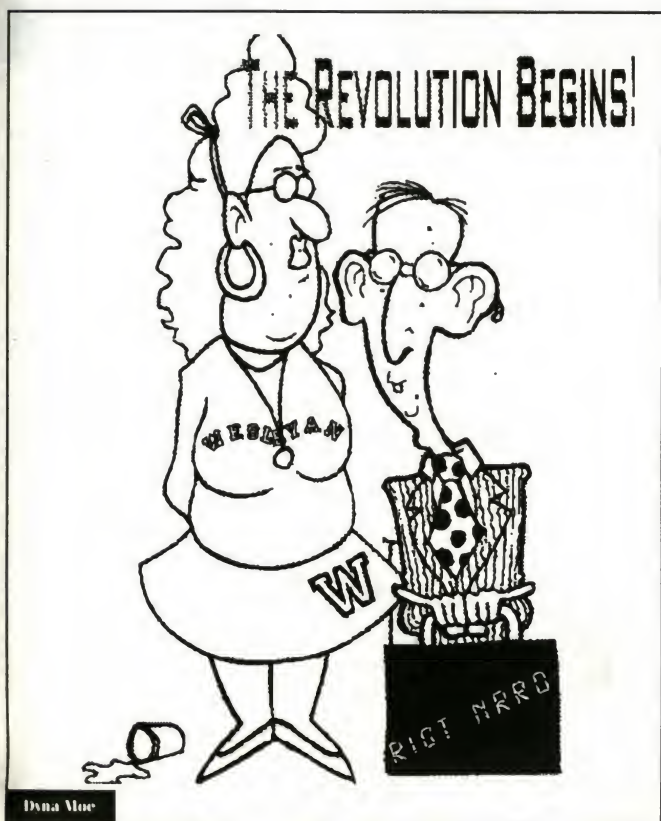
Because I was a social outcast during the K-8 years who read lots of books and was ten inches taller than everyone else, I am now a superior person.

today will become par for the course and the whole stigma will shift.

Actually, I take back that part about nerds being underrepresented. Nerds aren't an underrepresented culture. My mother was right: nerds run the country. Bill Clinton and Al Gore are big nerds. Bill Gates is a nerd and he's the richest man in the country. Every time you switch on a light, turn on a computer, or take out the chess set, remember the nerd that innovated those things. When you think about non-nerds and their contributions to society, you'll see that their marks on society are few and far between. What have they contributed? Slavery? Football? The Ice Capades? Puleaze. Nerds kick ass.

From what I've seen at Wesleyan, and I've spent my last two years at a college that is not nerd-friendly, there are others who bravely share in the institution of nerd pride. I look around at many of my fellow Wesleyanites and I feel a certain kinship. What I have not found, however, is a consensus on the interpretation of the term Nerd, and its synonyms and euphemisms. "I was more of a geek. I was anti-establishment, more anarchic, whereas the nerds supported the establishment," explained Dyna Moe, '00, my roommate and the owner of an extensive collection of lounge music on vinyl.

We should all be proud to be different, original people, even if we don't use the term Nerd to define it. We should also recognize differences within the nerd social structure, as we have had a range of experiences and theories on what being a nerd means. Perhaps someday, the Nerd Pride/Riot Nrrd movement will touch all corners of this great earth of ours. Someday, even non-nerds will climb onto the rooftops and blast their Roger Miller albums with glee. It's ten o'clock on a Saturday night. I am going to study now.



SOCIETY

HERMES November, 1996



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